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IN A WORLD THAT HAS MOVED ON...

Earning the title of Gunslinger at the unheard-of age of fourteen, young Roland Deschain quickly became a target for his father's enemies, namely the "Good Man" John Farson, and was forced to flee his home of Gilead or face death.

Accompanied by his ka-tet mates, Cuthbert and Alain, Roland traveled to the seaside town of Hambry. The townspeople, under the control of Farson and his evil master, the Crimson King, attacked, and the ka-tet were forced to flee for their lives. During their escape, the boys stole Farson's greatest prize, the seeing sphere known as Maerlyn's Grapefruit.

Despite being rescued from the Crimson King by his young friend, Sheemie, and safely returned to Gilead with the rest of his ka-tet, Roland was still secretly under the Grapefruit's spell. Refusing to let it out of his sight, Roland has been drawn once more into its pinkish nightmare depths.

After officially awarding Cuthbert and Alain their guns and declaring them full gunslingers, Stephen Deschain, Roland's father and dink of Gilead, rode out with his fellow gunslingers and intercepted a gang of Farson's men. Unbeknownst to the men of Gilead, however, a traitor was in their midst. The traitor was dealt with and Farson's men defeated. Then Steven Deschain tended to his wounded fellows.

Back in Gilead, Aileen Ritter, niece of Cort, the trainer of gunslingers, has taken it upon herself to do what no young woman before her has ever done—become a gunslinger.



The first thing that strikes the eye when nearing Our Lady of the Rose in Pebaria is what folks call the "stone guardians." Legend has it that if anyone approaches the nunnery with so much as an impure thought...

...one or more of the statues will spring off their pedestals and crush the life out of ya.





Couldn't tell ya if there's any truth to it or not, but if your conscience is soiled--and ya know who y'are--I'd suggest giving the sisters a wide berth.

Every one of these guardians protects a separate entrance, each of which opens onto an individual path leading to a central tower. A symbolic tower, really, for the sisters worship Gan, the god whose dominion is the formidable Park Tower.

It represents their faith just as a cross symbolizes the Man Jesus for other sisters. 'Cept the cross don't necessarily send a chill down your spine.



And there's one building off by itself in the northwest corner. It's made of cold, drab stone, and a statue sits perched in eternal mourning outside.

REPEAT. YE WHO ENTER HERE.

Listen closely and you could swear you almost hear it sobbing in perpetual grief.

Or maybe somehow it's just absorbed years' worth of lamentations of those dwelling within...

...and echoes them like a sorrowful wind passing through a canyon.

This is a retreat for noblewomen who have brought disgrace upon themselves and seek penance.

Of its denizens, there are fewer who are more noble, or more disgraced...

...than Gabrielle Deschain.

Mother of Roland, and betrayer of her husband, Steven.



She works quickly and briskly at her weaving, hands moving with practiced skill.

The only sounds in the stillness of the room are the whist-whoist of the loom...

...and the occasional sobs betraying her grief.

The grief is actually always there, and she's always fighting to keep it buried within her. Sometimes she's successful.

Sometimes... less so.



This particular moment is one of the latter times.

The timing is unfortunate.

Art thou crying?

A little, sister.

Excellent. Sorrow cleanses and brightens the soul.

"Then mine should be positively scintillating," she murmurs, too soft for the nun to hear.

Come. The friar has arrived to hear thy final confession.

I shall strive to make it...memorable.



Meanwhile, in Gilead, another confession has already proven memorable--

You admit to stealing guns from the armory?

I had to. It's not as if they'd ever give them to me.

And dressing like a boy in the bargain? Gods' wounds, Aileen, what's wrong with skirts?

You like 'em so much, Uncle Cort? You wear them.

Don't sass me, or I swear, girl or not, I'll do you like--

Like what? A boy? If that's the only measure of equality I warrant...

...then I'll take the beating and be grateful for the opportunity.

I'm trying to betroth you to Roland Peschain. For gods' sake! The future dinh of Gilead! And you don't even seem to know who or what you are!

You're wrong, Uncle. In the fire of my heart, in the skill of my hand, I'm a gunslinger. Just as you taught me to be.

You mistook my intent. As your only living relative, I simply taught you to defend yourself in a dangerous world.

And what's wrong with using my talent to defend *others* in this dangerous world? What's wrong--

--with being who I am?



Is this the
fate that my
dead mother--
your sister--
would have
wanted for
me?



To be
protected rather
than protector? To
be less rather than
more?

Answer me
truly, Uncle, and
I will abide by your
opinion.

Eight.

Nay, you won't.
Just like your
mother, you're a
lousy liar.

You'll be
what you'll
be.

I'll be what
you, and what
Gan who gave
me a keen eye,
made me.



Then we'll
leave it to him
to decide what
to do with ye. To
Gan...and to Steven
Deschain when he
gets back.



Meanwhile, Steven Peschain and his gunslingers are working on doing that very thing.

Lesser men would be complaining about the nature and duration of the ride. They're tired, dirty from the road, their clothes stained with the blood of their enemies and, worse, their friends.

But not the gunslingers, no. For all they acknowledge the harshness of their lives, you'd think they were simply returning from a day tending to cattle.

They do what they have to and that's all there is to that.

Still, it don't mean they ain't concerned for each other's welfare.

Charles?
You're bleeding.
Need us to rest
a spell?

With all respect,
Steven, stop fussing
over me. Am I a woman
who goes faint over
the sight of my own
blood?





I'll be damned if I'm responsible for a single one of us getting home to his bed and wife a minute later than he has to.

Speaking of wives, yours is nearly to term with your child, am I right?



Fair to pop any day, it seems, although the midwife swears another month. Also she says it's a boy. Something about "carrying low."

Midwives always say it's a boy. They figure it's what we want to hear.

Well, I'm hoping she's right in this case.

As do I. A son of your loins would make a formidable gunslinger.

I swear, seems scarcely an eye blink ago that Roland was a mewling newborn. Ne'er forget my face? He couldn't even see it.



I can only pray that my son does me as proud as yours has done you.

Thankee, sai. Although, honestly, I'm concerned over his mood since returning from Hambry.

Perhaps he is simply morose over his mother's betray--uhm...



My apologies, dink. I should not have spoken so--

So what? Honestly? You've naught to apologize for.

One can only pray that when Gabrielle returns from her retreat in Debaria-- hopefully in time for the boy's coming of age celebration-- she will have made sufficient contrition for her sins.



In Debaria, Gabrielle is likely wondering whether there's enough contrition in her soul--indeed, in the souls of all those in Midworld--to atone for her duplicity.

I always enjoy this time of year. The butterflies are out in force.

What is this? Skepticism on thy face?

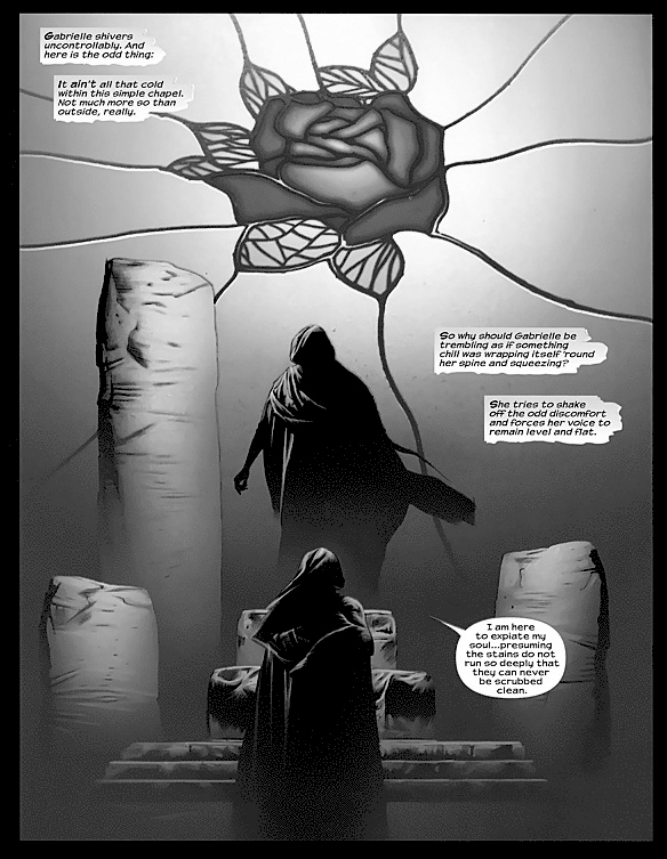
I did not mean to offend, sister. You just... never seemed one to appreciate casual beauty.

I appreciate butterflies for what they *represent*, child. The potential for transformation from something small and crawling to something of luminous glory.

Let *thy* sinning spirit be *similarly* transformed, and all will be well.

Enter and make confession.

Yes, sister.



Gabrielle shivers uncontrollably. And here is the odd thing:

It ain't all that cold within this simple chapel. Not much more so than outside, really.

So why should Gabrielle be trembling as if something chill was wrapping itself round her spine and squeezing?

She tries to shake off the odd discomfort and forces her voice to remain level and flat.

I am here to expiate my soul...presuming the stains do not run so deeply that they can never be scrubbed clean.

The cloaked figure speaks barely above a whisper; she has to strain to hear him.

What stains are those, my child?

I betrayed my husband, Steven Deschain, and my son, Roland, by committing adulterous actions. My crimes are inexcusable.

Love excuses much, my child. Did you love this man with whom you sinned?

I...did. Yes. 'Twas forbidden, and yet with all my heart, I did.

Did?
Of...
...do?



Marten...?

Marten...
am I...?

Dreaming?

Yes. Yes,
dreaming, or
lost to madness
or--

No madness.
And if you are
dreaming, then I
am dreaming
alongside you.

But this is no
dream. Rather it is
an awakening from a
nightmare of uncertainty
and misery thrust upon
you by those who neither
understand nor
appreciate you.

Only I
have ever truly
understood
you, Gabrielle.
Only I.

Cheating pervades the air this day. Whether it's a woman cheating on her husband in a far-off nunnery--

--or the whispers of "cheaters" back in Gilead that follow Alain and Cuthbert as they walk past self-styled tormentors.



Ignore them, Alain. They're simply jealous because we've won our guns and they haven't.

Well, that's the point, isn't it, Alain?



They think we didn't win them so much as have them handed to us.

They'd think twice if they knew what we endured in Hambry. It would have broken the strongest of them...

...especially when you think about what it did to Roland.



Yes, well...
that's an
open sore
isn't it.

A sore that's
going to remain
*fester*ing as long
as he keeps nursing
that damnable
globe, that...
Grapefruit.

You're
saying--

You know
perfectly well
what I'm saying,
Bert.



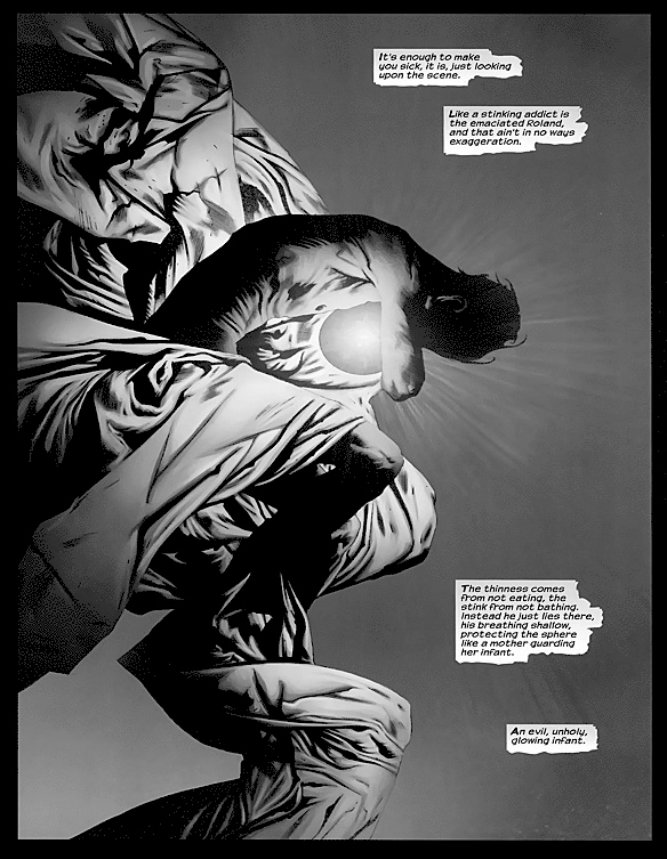
Aye, I do.
Whether Roland
desires it or
not--

--we're going
to have to take
the Grapefruit from
him and turn it over
to his father.

It's what he swore he was
going to do anyway. We're
just helping him keep his
word, that's all.

You think
he'll see it
that way?

Not a
chance.



*It's enough to make
you sick, it is, just looking
upon the scene.*

*Like a stinking addict is
the emaciated Roland,
and that ain't in no ways
exaggeration.*

*The thinness comes
from not eating, the
stink from not bathing.
Instead he just lies there,
his breathing shallow,
protecting the sphere
like a mother guarding
her infant.*

*An evil, unholy,
glowing infant.*

And if ya listen closely, you can hear him muttering as his mind wanders across a vast dreamscape.

"She's coming," he says, gasping like a drowning man. "She's coming from on high. Coming across the desert..."

"...soaring over the Xay River Canyons..."

"Reeking of evil, heading toward Gilead to perform Farson's deadly mischief."

"She's coming..."

"Rhea, the witch of the Coos is coming."

Rhea, the evil creature who was behind the death of Susan Pelgado and who-knows-how-much-else evil.

Covered with sores and festering boils, there's no good reason for him to recognize her. And yet, he does. He knows her with the same sort of deep-seated horror/shudder/revulsion that seize men when they first encounter snakes, spiders, and other crawling creatures that would do wickedness unto them.



And nothing more wicked has ever this way come than Rhea of the Coos.



Roland starts to thrash about, his hands grabbing at air, as if he could reach through from the waking world into the dream and snatch Rhea away from her foul mission.



"Away, demonesse. Away from my father's tower!" he cries.



"Such as he is not for such as you! He was born to fight great battles against armed men.



"Not to suffer the attentions of deceitful, unclean haridans as you.

*"Father! Death comes
for you on a spider's leg!"*

*"Turn away from the maps
and battle plans you're
designing to deal with
Farson..."*

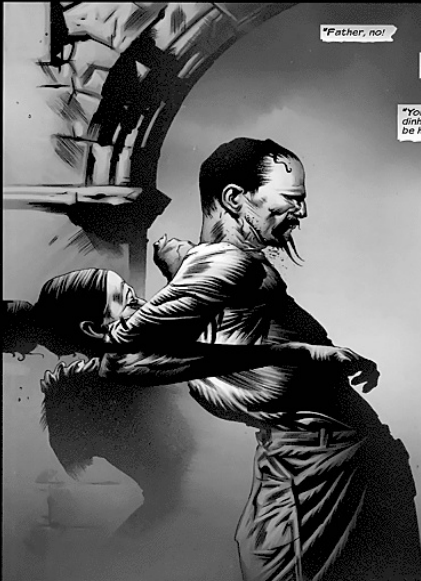
*"...and see that the
war has come to your
innermost sanctum!"*



*"How can you not hear
her, her breath wheezing
and rasping in her withered
lungs? How can the air not
reek from the pustulant
sores on her decaying skin?
What spell has she cast to
deadend your senses to--"*

*"Father! Oh God,
father, turn around
before--!"*





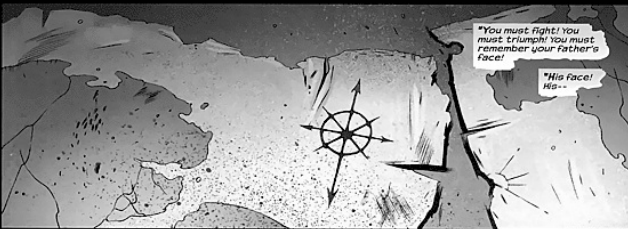
"Father, no!"

*"Fight her! Fight this...
this creature!"*

*"You are Steven Peschain, the
dinh of Gilead! This cannot possibly
be how you are ended!"*

*"You cannot be brought
low by base treachery, deceit,
an act of cowardice!"*

*"No merciful God would
permit such a thing to
happen!"*



*"You must fight! You
must triumph! You must
remember your father's
face!"*

*"His face!
His--"*



"...head..."

TO BE CONTINUED



I DO NOT AIM WITH MY HAND;

HE WHO AIMS WITH HIS HAND HAS FORGOTTEN
THE FACE OF HIS FATHER.

I AIM WITH MY EYE.

I DO NOT SHOOT WITH MY HAND;

HE WHO SHOOTS WITH HIS HAND HAS FORGOTTEN
THE FACE OF HIS FATHER.

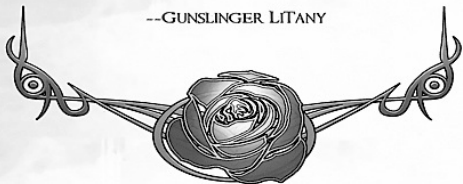
I SHOOT WITH MY MIND.

I DO NOT KILL WITH MY GUN;

HE WHO KILLS WITH HIS GUN HAS FORGOTTEN THE
FACE OF HIS FATHER.

I KILL WITH MY HEART.

--GUNSLINGER LITANY



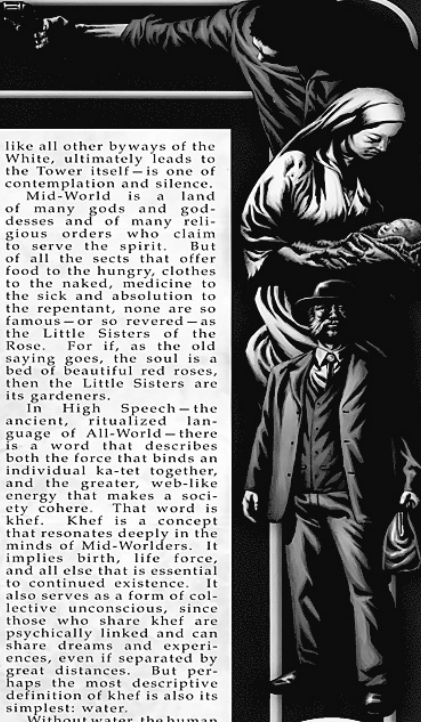


THE SHADOW OF THE ROSE



In Mid-World as in our world, many people long to devote their lives to a higher purpose. For such servants of the White¹, personal ambition is less important than working for the greater good of humanity. A large number of these individuals—such as midwives, herbalists, and physicians—express this longing to serve as a desire to care for the body. For others, such as gun-slingers, it manifests as an impulse to fight the evil of injustice. And perhaps this, too, is a form of healing, though it tends not to the mortal frame but to the body politic.

But there are others who also long to serve, though they are neither doctors eradicating disease with their medicines and scalpels, nor warriors battling the evil of the Outer Dark with sword or gun. Yet they, too, are healers of a sort. It is just that the Beam they follow—which,



like all other byways of the White, ultimately leads to the Tower itself—is one of contemplation and silence.

Mid-World is a land of many gods and goddesses and of many religious orders who claim to serve the spirit. But of all the sects that offer food to the hungry, clothes to the naked, medicine to the sick and absolution to the repentant, none are so famous—or so revered—as the Little Sisters of the Rose. For if, as the old saying goes, the soul is a bed of beautiful red roses, then the Little Sisters are its gardeners.

In High Speech—the ancient, ritualized language of All-World—there is a word that describes both the force that binds an individual ka-tet together, and the greater, web-like energy that makes a society cohere. That word is khef. Khef is a concept that resonates deeply in the minds of Mid-Worlders. It implies birth, life force, and all else that is essential to continued existence. It also serves as a form of collective unconscious, since those who share khef are psychically linked and can share dreams and experiences, even if separated by great distances. But perhaps the most descriptive definition of khef is also its simplest: water.

Without water, the human body dehydrates and dies. Without water, the earth cracks and becomes desert. Without the constantly flowing tides of emotion—which are also symbolized

¹ In Mid-World, The White is the elemental force of Good. It is the antithesis of the evil Outer Dark.



by this liquid element—society disintegrates. Khef is life itself, and life is khef. It is the flowing water of earth, but it is also the moisture of the body—its saliva, its blood, and its tears. Every child in Mid-World knows that the Dark Tower spirals upward into the heavens, but only metaphysicians realize that—like a great rose—its roots reach downward into the deepest reservoirs of khef, the very waters of eternity.

Each Sister who dons a white wimple pledges herself to charity, chastity, and to the khef. But of these three vows, the last of them is most sacred. For the Little Sisters take their vow to the life force of khef extremely seriously, maintaining that they are the siblings of the entire human race. If a single man goes without food, then they too hunger. If a woman dies of thirst, then they share in that horrible death. And if one man kills another in rage, they feel both the pain of the death-wound and the guilt and grief of the one who wields the offending weapon.



Among Gilead's worldly courtiers, the Little Sisters of the Rose are most famous for the retreat they have created for disgraced women, where many a high born lady has gone to pay penance for betraying her husband or her city. But to the Sisters themselves—radiant but humble in their white habits, the breasts of which are embroidered with a single, dusky pink rose—the maintenance of this retreat is the least important of their labors. And after a year spent cooking, mending, and cleaning for the poor, the ill, and the wounded, those penitent daughters of Gilead would have to agree.

Anyone brave enough to visit the smoldering wreckage left by John Farson and his hordes after they have razed and looted a city will inevitably see the Sisters' white tents erected nearby, the front flap of each canvas emblazoned with the symbol of their Order. Within these tents lie

the scalded, speared, or bullet-ridden wounded, all of whom are tenderly nursed by the Sisters. Just behind the tents stand the makeshift abodes and campfires of displaced families. And behind those, the cookfires where the Sisters prepare meals for people too shell-shocked or ill to cook for themselves. At the edge of their encampment lie the mass graves where the Sisters have laid the slaughtered to rest, and the small, unadorned prayer tent where the bereaved can give honor to their gods and their dead.

Following in the wake of Farson's destruction—their white wimples billowing amid the winds and smoke of destruction—is a dangerous life-choice for the Sisters. Already many have been killed by enemy fire, or have been captured, raped, flayed, or burned for the amusement of Farson's vicious troops. Yet when dignitaries come to the Sisters' motherhouse in Debaria, asking why they continue to serve in this manner despite the dangers it poses to them, the Sisters reply

that they do not fear mortal men. The enemies of the White may destroy their bodies, but the Outer Dark will never touch their souls.

Yet as the Sisters know all too well, the White also has powerful enemies, and sometimes those enemies can gain footing in the most unlikely of places. As the old saying goes, those who walk in the full light of the White inevitably draw the attention of shadows. And in the past, the Little Sisters have had to battle a fair share of those creatures of darkness.

At the heart of the Sisters' motherhouse in Debaria—itsself a walled estate of pastures, fertile fields, barns, cookhouses, and dormitories—lies a sacred rose garden, unequaled anywhere in Mid-World. At the center of the garden stands a temple in the shape of the Dark Tower itself, but its central oriel window is not a pane of thirteen colors, as is the window of the Tower that lies at the heart of End-World, but a magnificent piece of stained glass in the shape of a rose.



For despite the beauty of the temple, it is the Sisters' spectacular roses that draw pilgrims from every corner of Mid-World: roses which are dusky pink on the outside, fierce red on the inside, with centers as yellow as the sun. And it is said that if you sit long enough in that garden, with your eyes closed and your breathing regular and steady, you can hear them sing.

According to legend, all the roses in the Sisters' garden sprang from one single blossom brought to the motherhouse by the Order's founder more than three hundred years ago. After instructing her followers to till the fields, feed the hungry, and nurse the sick, Big Sister took her walking stick and set out in the direction of the sunset. Her purpose? To speak to Gan, the animating spirit of the Dark Tower, located deep in End-World. She was gone ten years.

When she returned—white haired, thin as a scarecrow, and leaning heavily upon her walking stick—she held in her hand the most magnificent rose that anyone had ever seen. Though its single taproot had been cradled in her palm for many years, Big Sister said that the rose had not died during her travels because she had watered it with her tears. When the women of her Order questioned her more deeply about what she had experienced that made her tears flow so abundantly, she merely shook her head, saying that her tests and trials did not matter, since in the end she had brought back a flower from the garden of the Dark Tower itself.



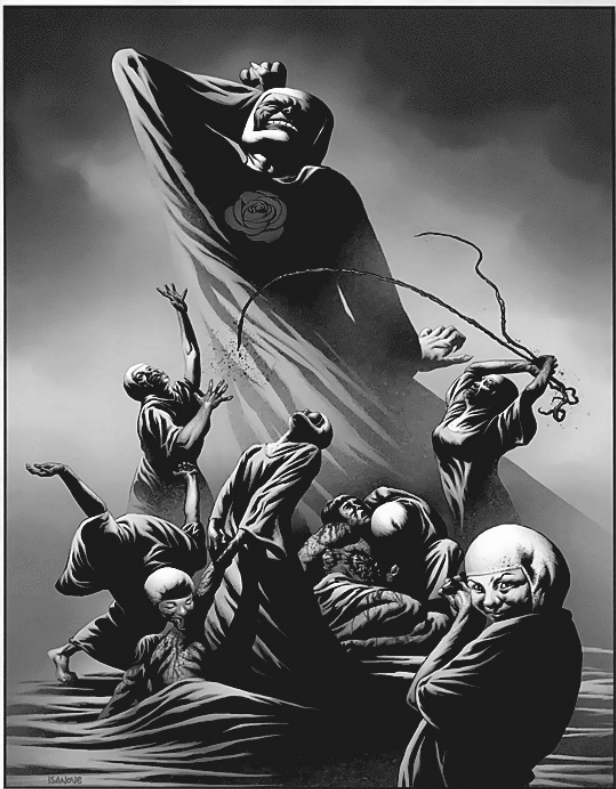
In the Little Sisters' garden, the magical rose tunneled its roots deep into the reservoir of the khef which they so carefully tended. Fed by such a rich water source, it flourished and multiplied, until the Sisters' garden was full of nodding, dusky-pink roses that murmured and sang. But, unfortunately, that beautiful rose was not the only enchanted entity that Big Sister had brought back with her from End-World, though she did not real-

ize this until much later. Creeping along in her shadow, but avoiding the scent and the song of the rose as well as it could, was a creature both invisible and deadly. Like an infection, it entered the motherhouse behind Big Sister and then, crouching in the shadow of the rose garden it was drawn to, but which it abhorred, it bided its time.

The first Sister grew pale and wan about a year after Big Sister's return. As she had been a generous soul, unusually diligent in her devotion to the khef, she was buried in a plot not far from the rose garden and a spectacular rose was planted over her grave. Soon after a second Sister wilted, and then a third, until there were five graves near that rose garden fed by the waters of the khef. But it wasn't until one moonlit night, a full month after the sixth Sister had died and a rose had been planted over her grave, that the Sisters heard a knocking on their door. They opened it, only to see their dead companions standing on the stoop, the dusky pink roses embroidered on their death shrouds glittering.

Big Sister—who had been grieving over the deaths of so many of her followers—called their return a miracle. She gave thanks to Gan for the magical, life-giving rose she had brought back from End-World, saying that now none of her adopted daughters would ever die. The resurrected Sisters nodded in unison and, speaking as one, said that the khef of the roses had restored their souls. But though Big Sister was overjoyed, some of the younger members of the Order examined the black rose slime that now covered the undisturbed graves of those they had once loved, and doubted. But they said nothing.

It was at this time that the temple in the shape of the Dark Tower was designed and built by stonemasons whose lives had been saved by the miraculous healing powers of the resurrected Sisters. For when a building had collapsed in a nearby town, crushing the masons' bodies, the Sisters had restored them to health, though by what means no one knew. The resurrected Sisters had erected their own white silk hospital tent just beyond Our Lady's outer wall, and would let none of the other members of their Order enter. They said that they had brought something magical back with



them from the land of the dead, but no living person could see it, lest they learn that which no mortal being should know. And so saying, they shut the flap of their tent and tied it down. And though their Sisters could sometimes hear sounds through that thin but muffling silk—sounds that sometimes reminded them of the humming of insects and sometimes of tinkling bells—they never knew what happened within.

What first aroused Big Sister's suspicions was that, while most of the injured men and women who entered that white silk tent left fully cured, a fair number disappeared. Yet when Big Sister asked to see the corpses, her request was refused. And when she asked again, saying that the bodies had to be returned to the bereaved families, the resurrected Sisters smiled to one another, and then speaking in unison—almost as if they were one being, but in three bodies—they told her that all of the lost men had contracted a terrible infection, and that their bodies had been interred immediately for safety's sake. Then all three smiled beneficently and walked back to their tent, which was placed out of the way of the rose-scented breeze that wafted over the high outer wall.

Big Sister narrowed her eyes, but said nothing. As she walked away, leaning even more heavily upon her stick, she thought back to her travels through End-World, and of the many terrible infections she had encountered there. She strongly suspected that one of those diseases had somehow entered her convent, and she would have to eradicate it.

One moonlit night, when the other Little Sisters were abed, Big Sister crept to that silk tent that the resurrected Sisters had erected just beyond the Order's outer wall, as far from the scent and the singing of the roses as they could get. Silent as the dark, Big Sister held her breath, lifted the corner of the silken door flap, and peered in.

No sooner had she seen what lay within than she jerked back her hand and the silken flap slipped from her trembling fingers. Her arthritic hand flew to her withered old lips to stifle a scream. Lying in beds of white silk were at least half a dozen unconscious men, their

bodies crawling with singing insects the size of fat honeybees. But that was not what had appalled her. Oh no. What sent her hobbling back to the main dormitory as fast as her old legs could carry her was the face of a seventh Sister—one who had never belonged to their Order. And while the faces of the six revenant Sisters horrified her—gloating over the bleeding body of an unconscious man whom they bit and licked as if he were a piece of meat—it was the face of the seventh that made her pray to Gan to protect her soul.

Though it wore a white wimple and a white habit, it was not human. Its gray skin was both various and flowing, and as the vampire-Sisters fed from the body of the bleeding man, it grew bright and shuddered with evil delight. It was almost as if the kief of the dying man was being transferred to it via the vampiric Sisters' deadly kisses. And it was only later that Big Sister remembered that the rose upon its breast had not been dusky pink at all, but the deep red of old blood.

After staking the revenants who had desecrated their convent, the Little Sisters dragged the unconscious men from their beds and burned that white silk tent. But even as they did so something flapped out of the flames. It was huge and black and screeched like a banshee, or like an evil bird of prey that had been forced from its filthy nest.

The next morning, the Sisters disinterred the six coffins and filled their rotted hollows with salt. After burning the coffins, they asked the stone masons who had helped them once before to carve the effigies of the twelve Guardians of the Beam that now adorn Our Lady's inner wall. For as the old saying goes: those who walk in the full light of the White inevitably draw the attention of shadows. And in those shadows are many creatures of nightmare who feed on the kief of men and of roses. CR

WRITTEN BY:

ROBIN FURTH

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RICHARD ISANOVE



DARK TOWER: TREACHERY ISSUE #3

SKETCHBOOK

A look at some of Jae Lee's original pencil art.
The finished versions, painted by Richard Isanove,
appeared earlier in this issue.











REPENT. YE WHO ENTER HERE.



THE LONG ROAD TO TREACHERY

Marvel.com brings you up to speed with the names and faces of
DARK TOWER: TREACHERY

By Neil Kleid

The road has been long and the dangers many, but this September, Roland Deschain's ka-tet returns home.

Picking up the pieces of **THE LONG ROAD HOME**, this summer's latest chapter in the critically acclaimed series based on Stephen King's "Dark Tower" novels, the epic tale of the last gunslinger's quest, **DARK TOWER: TREACHERY** finally brings Roland, Cuthbert and Alain back to Gilead, their families and the beginning of the end. But just because the gunslingers have come home, doesn't mean the danger has faded—evil lurks outside Gilead's walls, beneath its corridors and within the hearts of the three young men who have brought home with them In-World's greatest threat: Maerlyn's Grapefruit, the pink shard of Wizard's Glass which has captured Roland in its seductive clutches.

Before our ka-tet—because you and I, faithful readers, are bound by a tet all our own—travels those last, final miles on the long road home and into the heart of treachery, let's take a moment to recall the familiar names and faces we'll be seeing in the pages

of **TREACHERY**, either swelling our hearts or striking fear into them—do ya kennit?



ROLAND DESCHAIN

The last descendant of Arthur Eld, first of the gunslingers, Roland is destined to travel All-World and reach the Dark Tower, the axis upon which infinite numbers of parallel worlds rotate. Years before his quest began, Roland, son of Steven, battled his teacher for the right to bear his first pair of guns and was sent east to the town of Hambry where he met and lost his true love, was ensnared in the deadly web of the Crimson King, and was trapped by the malevolent temptations of Maerlyn's Grapefruit, one of the last remaining seeing stones. As Roland returns to Gilead and his father, his heart and mind are trapped there still.



CUTHBERT ALLGOOD

Brash, lively and social, Bert is Roland's closest childhood friend, from gunslinger training through the tragedy in Mejis and back down the long road home. Though events drove a rift between them,

Cuthbert fled an enraged posse and battled wolves in order to protect an unconscious Roland as the ka-tet traveled the road to Gilead, even going so far as to mercifully kill his own horse.



ALAIN JOHNS

Blond, blue-eyed and blessed with a cool head and psychic abilities, Alain often mediates skirmishes between Roland and Bert, especially in hot situations like those in Hambry. When Roland became trapped in the Grapefruit, Alain entered its realm to rescue him and was forcefully ejected by the seeing stone and the evil Marten Broadcloak. While helping Bert fend off a pack of wolves, Alain suffered injury but his wounds were healed by the arrival of Sheemie Ruiz who successfully retrieved Roland from the Grapefruit.



STEVEN DESCHAIN

A 29th generation descendant of Arthur Eld, Roland's father sent his son on a mission to the town of Hambry in the Barony of Mejis to keep him safe from the clutches of Marten Broadcloak, Steven's adviser and betrayer. Keeper of

Arthur Eld's guns—also known as "Excalibur"—Steven and his tet prepare to protect Gilead from the oncoming forces of John Farson, the Good Man, as Roland and his fellows return from their ill-fated mission.



MARTEN BROADCLOAK

Also known as Walter O'Dim, Flagg, and the Walkin' Dude, Marten Broadcloak acts as Steven Deschain's adviser and the Affiliation's chief betrayer. His seduction of Steven's wife, Gabrielle, enraged Roland into taking his gunslinger test early on orders of the Crimson King. In league with the King and John Farson, Marten pursued and attacked Roland inside Maerlyn's Grapefruit as the young gunslinger escaped Hambry, bringing him to the castle of the Crimson King where Roland was forced to join them or be killed. Sheemie Ruiz' timely arrival saved Roland but, as the possessed gunslinger reaches Gilead, Marten still plots in the shadows.



JOHN FARSON

Known as "The Good Man," Farson leads a revolution against Gilead, uniting the common man against the gunslingers toward a redis-

tribution of power. Though little is known about Farson before his revolution, his influence throughout the Baronies is spread far and wide — all the way to Mejis where Roland and his ka-tet foiled his plot to use Hambry's oil to power ancient machines, which could have wiped out the gunslingers. Collaborating with Marten, the Crimson King and the last of the Big Coffin Hunters, Farson is preparing to attack Gilead and bring down the gunslingers.



CLAY REYNOLDS

Handsome and debonair, Reynolds is the last surviving member of the mercenary band known as the Big Coffin Hunters, who were nearly wiped out by Roland, Bert and Alain. Reynolds escaped from Mejis with a posse that chased Roland's ka-tet on the long road home but lost them across the river.



SHEEMIE RUIZ

Formerly a Hambry tavern boy, Sheemie assisted Roland's ka-tet in stopping John Farson's plans but blames himself for the death of Susan, Roland's love. Mildly "touched in the head," Sheemie followed the gunslingers from Mejis to an abandoned

station—"The Dogan"—where he awakened long-dormant robots who experimented on him, granted him powers of teleportation, telepathy and healing. Reaching the gunslingers as Alain and Bert battled wolves and Roland fought Marten and the Crimson King inside the Grapefruit, Sheemie entered Maerlyn's seeing stone, forced Roland out, and disappeared.



CORT ANDRUS

Stocky and stoic, Cort taught Roland's ka-tet the ways of the gunslinger. When Roland—goaded into taking his test early by the treacherous Marten—bests Cort in battle, the young gunslinger wins his first pair of guns. Often rough with his students, Cort's gruff demeanor masks a wealth of valuable information Roland uses on his eventual quest for the Dark Tower.



THE CRIMSON KING

Evil incarnate, ruling from his castle in the dark reaches of End World, the spider-like Crimson King is obsessed with the thought of overthrowing the Dark Tower, the hub of all existence, mounting its steps and destroying it. Served by the foul

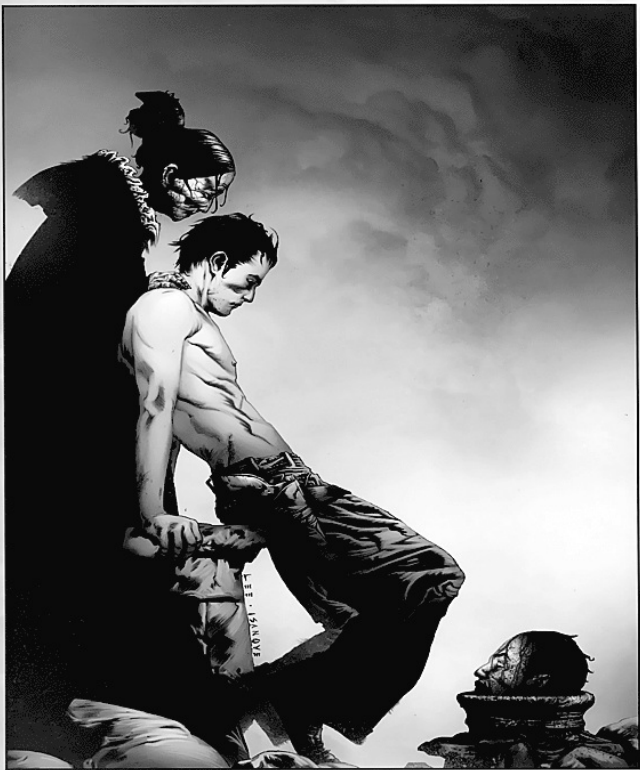
creatures of All-World, including Marten Broadcloak and John Farson, the Crimson King descends, like Roland, from a lineage of Arthur Eld himself. When Roland's mind was trapped in Maerlyn's Grapefruit, the evil creature asked the young gunslinger to help him destroy the Dark Tower and restore chaos to existence. Roland refused, but before the King could react, Sheemie Ruiz arrived and forced Roland from the Grapefruit. Roland and his ka-tet return to Gilead, but though they've reached the end of their long road home, their journeys, the trials and the treachery are just beginning. So swears the Crimson King. All hail the Crimson King.

For more on DARK TOWER, please visit Stephen King's official site:
<http://www.stephenking.com>

and Marvel.com's Dark Tower hub:
http://www.marvel.com/comics/Dark_Tower



NEXT: A spy of the Good Man, John Farson, infiltrates Steven Deschain's castle in Gilead to steal the dreaded seeing sphere — Maerlyn's Grapefruit!





All is not well in Mid-World. Young gunslinger Roland Deschain, the young man whose destiny it is to seek and save the Dark Tower, is haunted by horrifying visions from the evil seeing sphere, Maerlyn's Grapefruit. The Crimson King, enemy of all that lives, has long plotted the utter destruction of the Tower, and the undoing of reality itself. Now, with Roland unable to act, his monstrous foe has put his plan into motion...

From the creative team that brought Roland's early adventures to life in *The Dark Tower: The Gunslinger Born* and *The Dark Tower: The Long Road Home*, comes the next chapter of this dark saga of friendship, betrayal and a cosmic quest as conceived by master storyteller Stephen King.

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